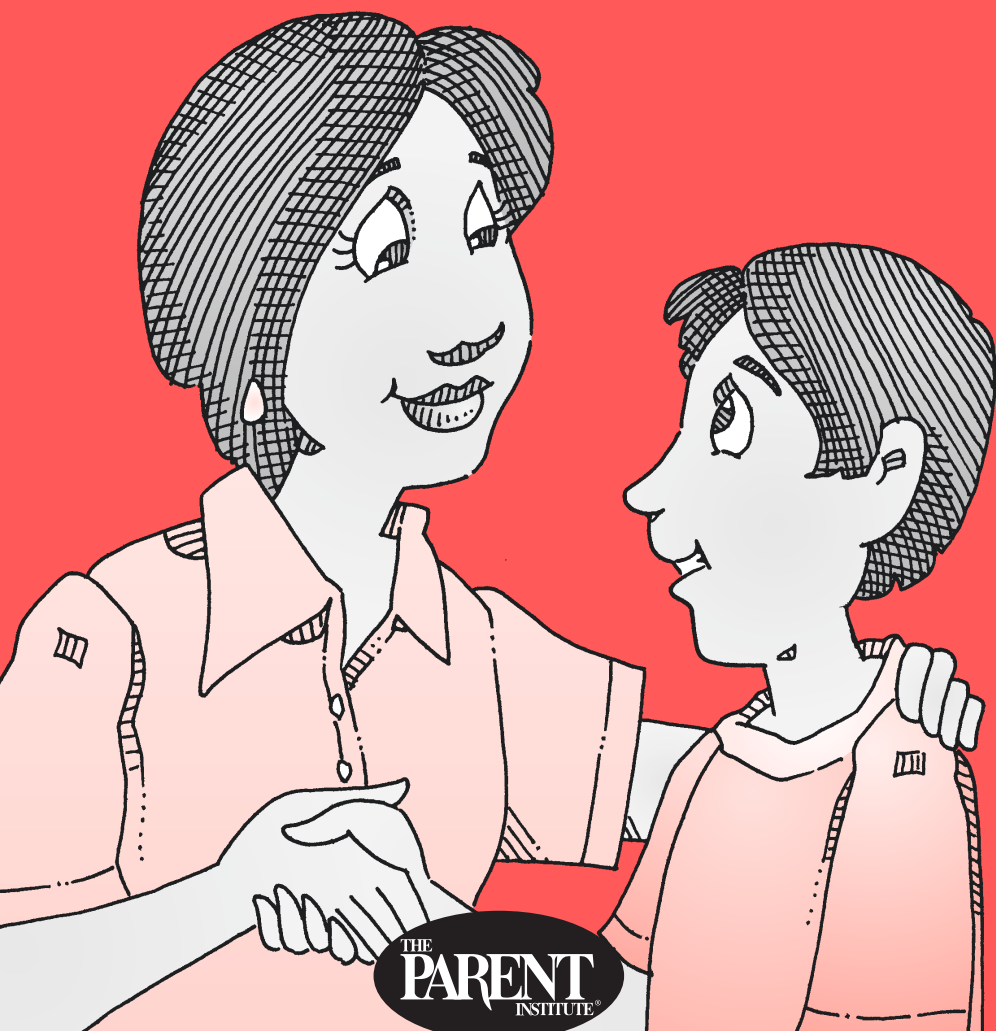


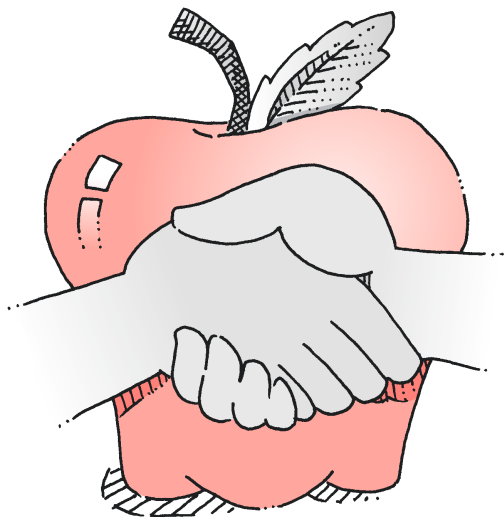
Skills *for* School Success

Ways Parents Can
Help Their Children
Do Better in School

WORKING WITH OTHERS



One of a Series of Booklets for Parents



Cooperation is powerful! It produces friendships and agreements. It bonds families together. It sparks great inventions. It helps build roads and power plants, schools and churches, office buildings and cities. Cooperation creates civilizations.

Schools help every child learn the basic skills he* must have for success in school—and in life. Schools teach reading and writing and arithmetic. They teach speaking and listening and critical thinking. But most agree that *learning how to work with others* is the vital skill that makes it possible for children to use everything else they have learned. Cooperation helps children become productive citizens, reach their full potential and live happy lives.

Encouraging your child to work with others is one of the best things you can do to help him succeed. This booklet is packed with ideas to show you how.



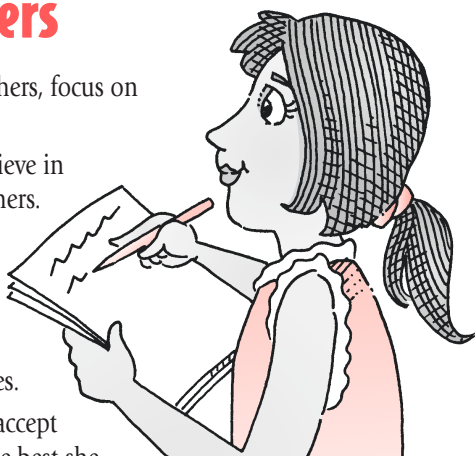
* Every child is unique, so we often use the singular pronoun. We'll alternate using "he/him" and "she/her" throughout this booklet.

Help Your Child Develop Ways To Work With Others

To help your child work well with others, focus on developing these qualities:

- **Self-esteem.** Your child must believe in herself before she can work with others. She must believe that she can make a contribution.
- **Respect for others.** Your child must see that others also have valuable ideas, opinions and abilities.
- **Responsibility.** Your child must accept her share of the group's work, do the best she can to help get it done and stand by the decisions of the group.
- **Active listening.** Your child should focus on others when they speak. She should be able to repeat what they say.
- **Flexibility and tolerance.** Your child should consider what others say. Agreement with everyone is not required, but tolerance of their ideas is.
- **Willingness to compromise.** Group work should combine the best from everyone. Your child should be willing to "give and take" to reach agreement.
- **Fairness.** Teamwork is based on fair treatment, sensitivity to the feelings of others and respect.
- **A positive attitude.** Working with others often takes more effort than working alone, but it can have greater results.

You'll find tips for developing each of these traits in this booklet. Try them out at home. You'll find they are fun to do. More importantly, you'll see your child develop the cooperation skills that will help her succeed in school—and in the years ahead.



Self-Esteem

Your child must believe in himself before he can work with others. Kids with high self-esteem have an “I-can-do-it” attitude. They can tackle a tough math problem or work out a spat with a friend.



Here are some ways you can help your child develop high self-esteem:

- **Encourage your child** to join worthwhile groups with children his age. Whether it's scouts or an athletic team, they can offer fun, friends and a boost in self-esteem.
- **Actively support groups** your child enjoys. Attend games, concerts or other special events. When appropriate, praise your child. But remember that it's better to say nothing than to criticize anything!
- **Find ways to help your child** develop skills in many areas. Athletics, music, art and creative writing are options.
- **Open your home** to your child's friends.
- **Make sure your child knows** you love him and accept him for who he is.
- **Understand your child's unique gifts.** Do not force a child to play sports if he would rather play the piano.
- **Help your child show off his success.** Everyone responds well to recognition. Some families use the refrigerator door as a showcase. Others use a scrapbook to save their child's best work.



Respect for Others

If your child can't get along with others, it could be her attitude. Thinking of others in a negative way often leads to acting that way toward them. The reverse is also true.

So encourage your child to look for strengths instead of faults. Discuss the following descriptions with your child. Can you add more descriptions to each column?

Instead of viewing someone as:	Consider that she might instead be:
Rude	Open and direct
Bossy	A leader
Nosy	Curious
Stubborn	Determined
Angry	Passionate
Lazy	Easy-going

Share with your child an example of someone you once disliked but came to respect after you learned more about him. This is a great discussion topic.

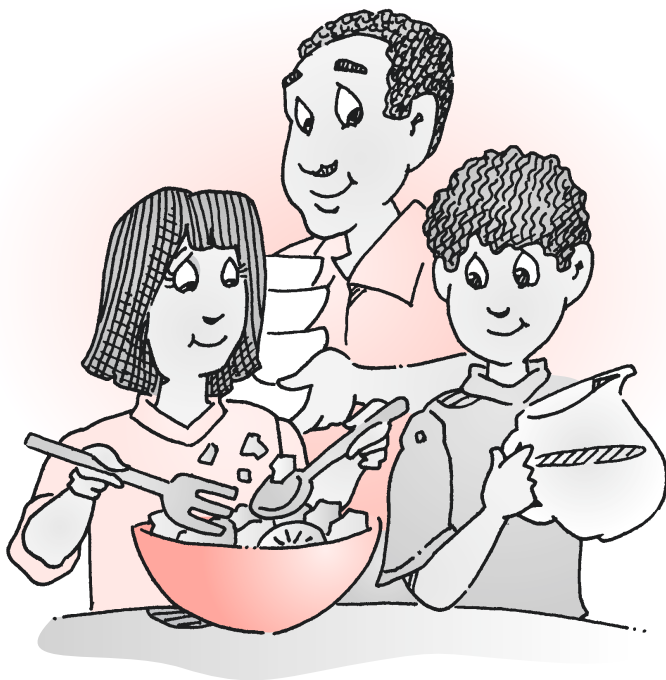
Responsibility

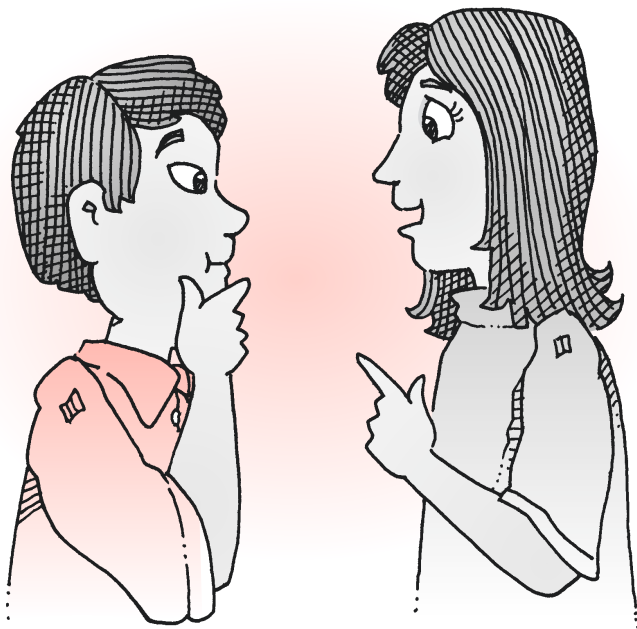
The way your family handles chores can help your child learn to work in a group.

Try thinking of your family as a *team*. Have everyone help pick up the clutter and put it away. Then divide up the work, but remain together in the same room. One child can vacuum the floor. Another can dust.

The same approach can work as you're cooking dinner. One person can make the salad while another person sets the table. You'll get the same work done—but you'll have a better time doing it. And it's good practice for group work.

Use the same idea when it's time to work in the yard. Everyone shares responsibility for the work and everyone does his share. Later, everyone in the family can enjoy the satisfaction of a job well done.





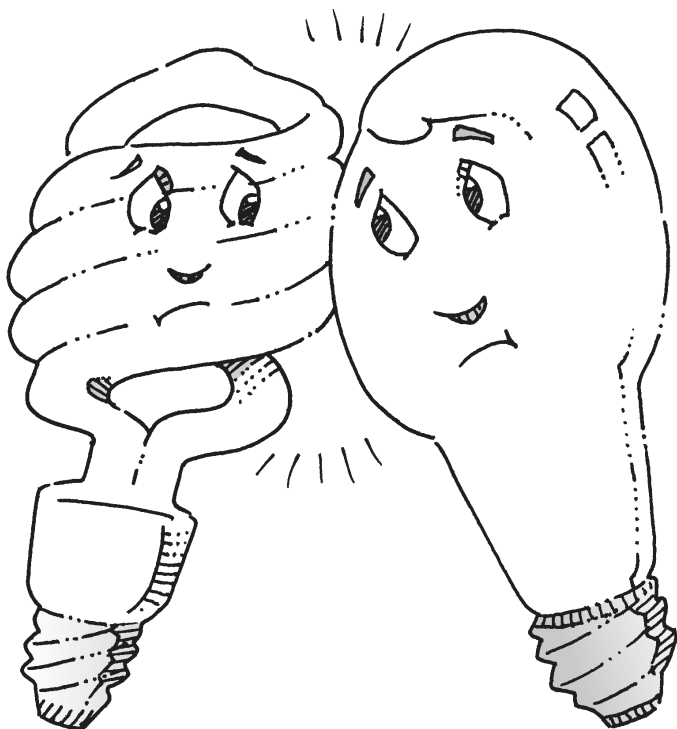
Active Listening

In group work, listening is as important as talking. Here's an activity to help your child become a better listener. It's called active listening.

One evening at the dinner table (or during your family meeting), have one person talk about something that's been on her mind.

Then have another person repeat what was said *in his own words*. A child might say, "Mom is upset because we aren't picking up our clothes. She says it makes the house look terrible."

If the person cannot restate what was said to the satisfaction of the person who said it, he tries again until he gets it right. It's good practice for working with others.



Flexibility and Tolerance

Successful group work often requires being tolerant of other people's ideas. Find examples in the newspaper or on TV of people with whom you disagree. Together, talk about how to work with people who hold beliefs different from your own.

Tell your child what you do when you encounter people whose values and ideas are different from yours. Point out how your own views may also seem strange to others.

Ask your child to suggest ways he should treat people when they disagree with his ideas.

Compromise

Give your child opportunities to participate in making group decisions at home. Let her weigh the pros and cons of a family decision.

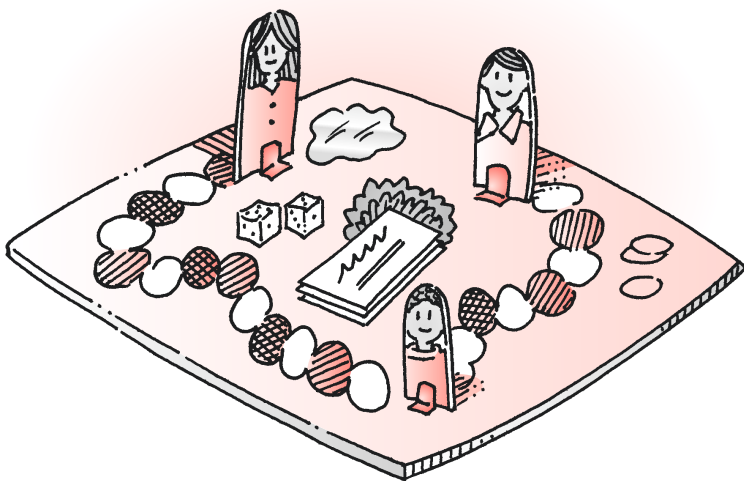
Start with a simple problem—for example, how to spend a Saturday afternoon. Let your child do the research. (“If we go to the early movie, we can save two dollars each.”)

Then help her suggest what the family should do. She’ll learn compromise and negotiation. (“Okay, I’ll go for a walk, but then let’s have a picnic afterwards.”) It’s good practice for working in any group.

Fairness

Traditional board games like Monopoly® or Scrabble® can teach your child to play by the rules, to wait her turn and to treat others as equals. So can many other games. Games also teach your child to be a gracious winner—or a good loser.

As you play, you are teaching your child valuable skills she’ll need to get along with others. So, don’t just save games for a rainy day.



A Positive Attitude

Working with others can be frustrating at times. But if your child is willing to practice the necessary skills and has patience with others as they practice, working together can produce powerful results!

Teach Your Child the Power Of a Simple Smile

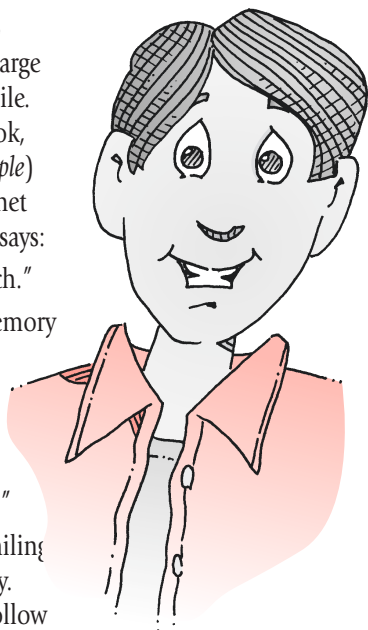
One commonly overlooked secret to working well with others in groups large or small is the power of a simple smile.

Dale Carnegie (in his famous book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*) points out that a smile is like a magnet that draws people near. As Carnegie says:

- “It costs nothing, but creates much.”
- “It happens in a flash and the memory of it sometimes lasts forever.”
- “It is rest to the weary, daylight to the discouraged, sunshine to the sad, and nature’s best antidote for trouble.”

When your child doesn’t feel like smiling tell him to muster up a smile anyway. Research shows that feelings often follow cues from the body. People who *act* happy will tend to actually *feel* happy.

And the smiles a child gets in return for his own smile will make him feel better—and make him feel more like smiling!



Create a Spirit of Cooperation At Home

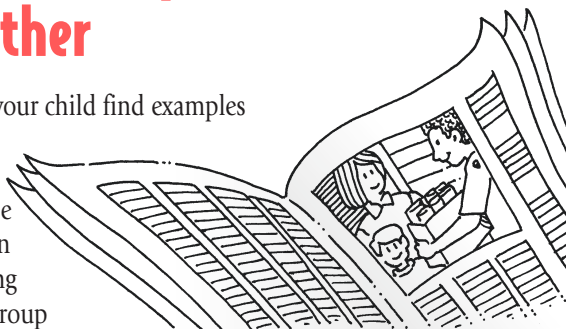
Here are some ideas to help develop a spirit of cooperation at home:

- **Look for signs of cooperation.** Then praise it. Say, "Thanks for pitching in. You were a big help." "We finished the job so much faster because we worked together."
- **Show confidence.** Tell your child you know she's capable of making contributions. "You can do it." "You can help by ..."
- **Talk about the various groups** you belong to—your family, your community, your recreation and special interest groups.
- **Listen actively.** Don't interrupt when your child tells you about problems. Repeat what she said to make sure you understand. Ask what she thinks should be done.
- **Celebrate together.** Whenever a friend or family member succeeds, everyone can enjoy the success. Plan a special meal or event.

Find Examples of People Working Together

Use the newspaper to help your child find examples of people working together to solve problems. Your community may schedule a cleanup day. An organization may sponsor a food or clothing drive for needy people. Or a group may collect funds to restore a town landmark.

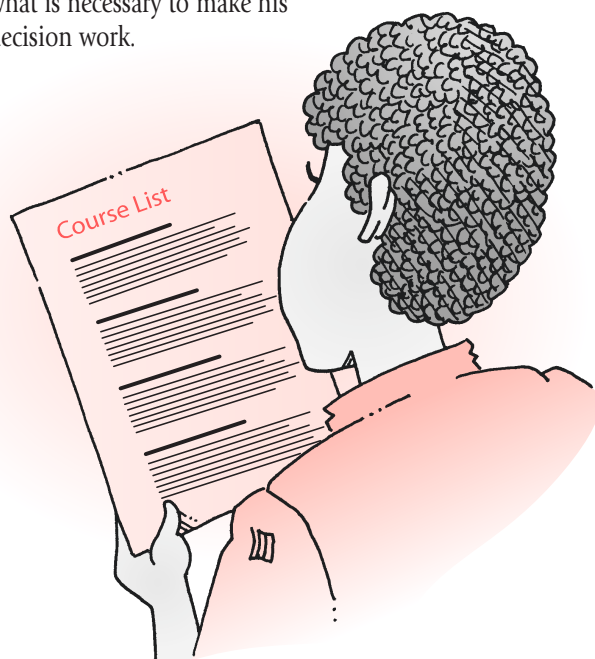
Talk with your child about what you find. See if she can think of other projects that would benefit from group effort.

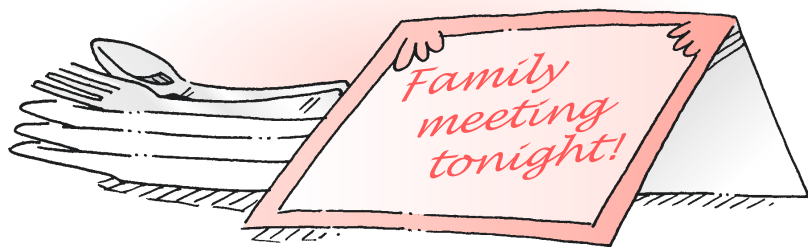


Practice the Problem-Solving Process

To help your child learn to work well with others, give him opportunities to practice the problem-solving process at home. Have him follow these steps:

- 1. List the options.** For example, suppose your child is trying to decide what courses to take in middle school. Have him make a list of all the courses he is considering.
- 2. Gather needed information.** If your child is planning to go to college, what courses will be necessary? Do any courses require completion of other courses first?
- 3. Consider the alternatives.** What are the advantages and disadvantages of each option?
- 4. Predict possible outcomes.** What are the likely outcomes of each possible decision?
- 5. Make a decision—and make it work.** Making a good decision often isn't the end of the job. A child must then do what is necessary to make his decision work.





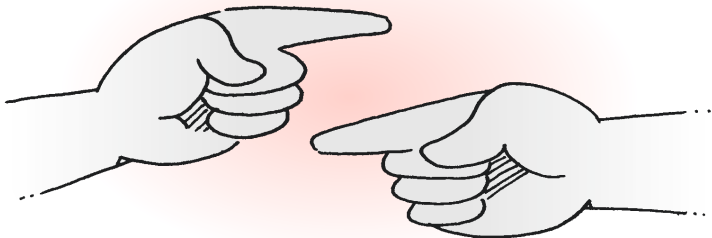
Teach Cooperation

Finding time to talk wasn't always a problem. Families once sat down to dinner together every night. But today, family meals can be disrupted by work and hectic schedules.

Many families find that a weekly family meeting brings everyone together. The meeting is good for airing gripes, passing out praise, planning meals for the week, making vacation plans, talking about plans for the future, and agreeing on weekly schedules. And it's an excellent way to give children practice in cooperation skills.

At family meetings, make sure:

- **Everyone gets a chance** to talk.
- **No one's ideas are** "shot down."
- **Everyone takes turns** leading and keeping notes at the meetings.
- **You don't dictate** all the topics. Discuss what your child is interested in.
- **The meetings don't become** just another way to tell your child what to do. This doesn't teach cooperation.
- **Everyone receives** thank-yous and compliments. Then watch how much more confident, capable and cooperative your child becomes.



Eliminate Sibling Rivalry

Often, before parents can help their children learn to work well with others, they must first find ways to stop them from fighting with each other! Children fight for many reasons. If you can find the underlying reason, you can stop the fights.

Here are some ideas to try when fighting gets out of hand:

- **Avoid assigning blame.** Don't take sides. Focus on the future. When a child says, "It's not my fault." Say, "I don't care who started it. Let's talk about how to avoid fighting."
- **Say something positive.** Children often fight when they don't feel loved and capable. They try to prove they are powerful by quarreling with others.

Try saying something like, "You don't have to fight. You can ask for what you want directly."

Of course, it's always important to remind children that you love them. Talk about what makes each child special. Regularly praise both effort and success.

- **Negotiate a win-win outcome.** Talk about options, not positions. What would each child like to see happen? What might be suitable alternatives?
- **Try role-playing.** For five minutes, have the children switch roles. Have each one present the other's point of view as clearly and fairly as possible. Often they'll start laughing and make up. Or they may come up with a compromise.

You can do a lot to help your child learn to work well with others. The skills are easy to teach. And there's no better place to practice cooperation than right at home!



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